a quarterly on Jainology

JAIN BHAWAN

CALCUTTA

Contents

Plates

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

The following is a statement of ownership and other particulars about *Jain Journal* as required under Rule 8 of the Registration of Newspapers (Central) Rules 1956 :

FORM IV

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I, Moti Chand Bhura, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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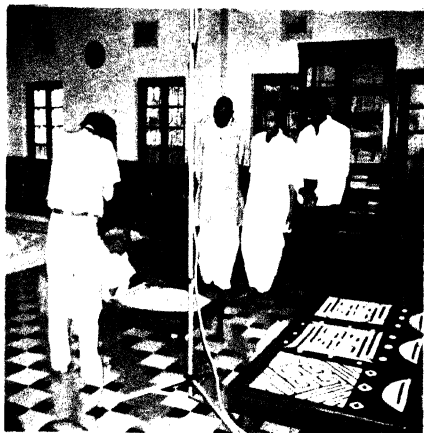
MOTI CHAND BHURA
Signature of Publisher

To commemorate the 10th Anniversary of its establishment the Japan Foundation (*Kokusai Koryu Kikin*) is planning to hold a comprehensive exhibition under the theme of 'Asian Cosmology' in Tokyo from September to November 1982. The proposed venue of the exhibition is *La Foret Museum*. Mr. Kohei Sugiura is its Art Director In this connection the Japanese representatives headed by Mr. Jun Wada visited the *Jain Bhawan*, Calcutta on 14th November, 1981 and took photographs of a number of Jaina *motifs* in the presence of Sri Ganesh Lalwani Editor, *Jain Journal* The photograph shows Mr Tabuchi of the team documenting Jaina drawings done with rice cereal that attempts to visualise the fourfold roads of existence, ways to liberation and the abode of the liberated souls seemingly on the verge of the outer space

Howard Banow 'Abhay'

Homage to the Perfect One

Glad am I to have known your name
You who became that immortal flame
while yet encased in form.
Blest am I to have found this path
of those who turn within,
And a teacher of light to be my guide
beyond what I might have been.

Fortunate beyond all measure
To have come upon this dawn
an omniscient soul
this teaching of love
the teacher of my heart.
My friends will know whose praise I sing,[1]
Yet this song is meant for every Way.
For it's not, in the end, the dawn we cherish,
But the fullness, completion, the Day.

[1] Lord Mahavira, but in homage to his universal message I chose to keep his name out of it and his Flame in it, hopefully.

PARESH CHANDRA DASGUPTA

From an Unknown Star

Where the bleak mountains stretch
Under an ancient sun
And the rocky valleys
Are fringed by woods
that try to shun
The changeful time,
And brood with silence
and reverence
Mysterious and deep
By the waves of frondes
and rustling leaves
When heaves
The light gale in its unseen flight—
And where the stars
of eternity
Sparkle as beads of light
With the moon-beam
saying to keep
The truth's cadence
In the bowers of dream,
There I stood before
a shrine
With blocks of stone displaced
And the toppling tower
majestic and fine
Only letting the view
of the Jina
Then I heard the echo
of an ancient hymn
As if beckoning for love
with drops of tears
From an unknown star !

PERCY HILL

Thou Shalt Not Kill

Death, natural death, is but a brother, friend,
But death by man inflicted is a crime
Against his spirit which can never end
But will presist beyond the bounds of time.

Who sheddeth blood, be it of man or beast,
By actual deed, or custom and consent,
Is aiding evil, being its high priest,
And earning for himself just punishment.

The crime of killing is man's greatest sin
Against his spirit and the creature slain ;
Let him renounce it, soon will he begin
His spiritual kingdom to regain.

He will advance where now he's standing still,
He will achieve where now he can but fail,
The light divine, now dim, his soul will fill,
His quest be ended for the Holy Grail.[1]

[1]Emblem of man's highest self.

V. P. JAIN

Lord Mahavira

Lord Mahavira, the hero of heroes,
How attractive is his meditative pose !
His physical and spiritual valour is unique
He is will-power's the highest peak
By his pure meditation attained perfection omniscience
Became complete living ideal of Truth, non-violence
Wherever he went on his religious tour
Foes turned into friends, enmity lost its colour.
He is light-house to show way to cross pains' ocean
He is Jina, victorious over evils, desires and passion.

GANESH LALWANI

Written at Panitabhumi

[It is recorded in the *Ācārānga Sūtra* that Lord Mahavira visited Panitabhumi in the far west of Bengal two thousand and six hundred years ago. Here the people living in the bleak landscapes though intially hostile to the would-be-Tirthankara later on became the earnest followers of the Law of the Nirgrantha.]

I have seen you on the road,
Seen you at noon.
How long it was ?

I have opened the sky,
Have opened the windows,
Ye were walking on foot,
Your eyes calm,
Your hands at ease,
Leaves were rustling in the wind.

Dust was whirling round,
In flocks
Village dogs gather
And bark aloud.
How long it was ?

You walked being within
Never looking up.
You never cared
Who came near
Or went away
Or threw stone at you
Or gave you a push.
How long it was ?

The sun was raining fire,
The earth was red and hot,
How long it was ?

Time was falling quietly,
Falling quietly
And melting ever.
Without food ye were the whole day
Still not quivered your broad chest
Nor moved your lips.
Your eyes were ocean of peace.

I want to be like ye,
Like the tree,
Free free with no bondage.
Oh my Lord,
Like ye I will burn
Karma particles sure
And bear my cross.

My chest will not quiver,
My lips will not move,
My eyes will be ocean of peace.

I have seen you on the road,
Seen you at noon.
How long it was ?

FRANK MANSELA

Avarice

It never is enough, there is no bound
To man's ambition, envy and desire,
One want fulfilled, another soon is found,
For gain increases greed, as fuel, fire.

I think the world turns round because of this,
The fever to possess and own and hold,
As though increase of riches led to bliss
Which is not true since joy is nowhere sold.

The grasping hand, the avaricious stare,
The hard-faced gambler seeking quick return,
The proud of purse, flamboyant everywhere,
Despising those who only toil and earn.

All these I see, and then, the bitter end,
Mourning the wealth there was no time to spend.

TARA CHAND PANDIA

To the Little Animals

What right have I to kill or injure you,
O Insects, Worms and Myriad other Lives
For my convenience, lust or blinding view
That me to negligence imprudent drives ?
Oh, like myself have you not life and breath ?
Have you too not desires, and love and hate ?
Do you not pain and pleasure feel, fear death,
And wish to live in peace at any rate ?
If you were born to serve our selfishness,
You life and love of life would not have got,
Have I a right to kill and to oppress
Because more strength and power have been my lot ?
If I am wiser and more powerful,
My duty is to pity you indeed
Should he who's stronger than me break my skull ?
Do I not higher Heaven's mercy need ?
When on our sins I look, I'm not surprised
Why we to ill-luck and to death succumb
No slightest sin can e'er go unchastised
By nature just of power immense though dumb,
Killing the weak defenceless is not brave,
Should you not live e'en your short life in peace ?
E'en now you many foes and troubles have,
Should I not cease your troubles to increase ?
Who knows what harm your slaughter to us brings ?
Who knows what benefits from you accrue ?
And e'en the ill which sometimes from you springs
Who's sure that it is ill or caused by you ?
With proper care now I shall try my best
To cease from harming you, brethren fair,
And in my harmless thoughts I finding rest
Shall worship well my harmless nature e'er.

CLARE ROSENFIELD 'BRAHMI'

Open to Them

Open to them
And in bowing down
We are raised up,
And in stepping back,
we come forward,
And in giving up,
We receive,
And in asking for nought,
All is showered upon us.

O glory be to the laws of nature,
For just they are and fair,
Living principles—balance and truth,
Omnisciently everywhere,
Setting into vibrating motion
Those immortal virtues four :
Amity, appreication, compassion, equanimity
Ye need to know not more.

Open to them
Inspiredly live,
Fully receive
In order to give.

Written in Hartsdale, N. Y. after a Pilgrimage to India with Gurudeva in 1975.

L. N. SAHU

Gate of Salvation

Up the way, up the way, she went and stood
at the Gate of Heaven
Down the way, down the way, she went and
stood at the brink of Hell
Then she turned again and crawled and
crawled, sore footed she crawled
And stood at the Gate of Heaven
Thus life passes from up the way and
down the vale
But the final is the Gate of Salvation.

MILFORD E. SHIELDS

Tirthankara

Put off, O Soul, the things of earth,
That have no spirit weight or worth :
Put on Light's a Crystal Purity,
The Substance of Infinity,
Bind them with Perfect Righteousness,
Tirthankara to busy and bless,
Soul to first realm of happiness.

Anoma Muhinda Thera

The Eternal Law

How many saints have walked this way
And preached the Law we love today ?
How many feet have walked this soil
To call us from our daily toil ?
Hear the teachers' words of bliss
Which lead us all to happiness !

Many Tirthankaras came
To teach that life was but a game :
We could lose or we could win,
Fail at the start and not begin
Secret see or secret miss,
And lose our chance of happiness.

Many times the sacred feet
Did tread this path and so repeat,
As the saints did teach before
The ageless and the timeless Law ?
Guide of the past always will
Be so right if we listen still.

Conversactions, Sweet in Jaina Truth

LEONA SMITH KREMSER

Praise to the praiseworthy,
Jaina Lord, the Lord Nemi.
He shared the truth of immortality
with the food-animal community.

Now the Lord Nemi came from His inward silence
and He beheld food-animals mid His yonder audience.

Said the Lord : "Humble One's
Ye Food-animals, heed this summon
to move beyond your lowly station
into the sweet truth of the Jaina religion.

Draw ye near,
for to this Lord, ye one and all are dear.
'Twas your elders, wailing to His wedding procession
that waked this Lord to His rightful mission.
By name, no more the Prince Arista Nemi
but dusty beggar He became, in search of charity.
Yet rare the alms that He sought,
'twas ultimate truth, by hard penance wrought.

In due term of *karma*, He took self-realization
by way of an all seeing vision :
Soul, everliving
in every living thing.
Soul, alone
within a reality its timeless own.
Soul, by free will
its pure nature due to fulfill.
O Himself in bliss,
that Soul was the ultimate truth of the Jinas' promise.

Soon this Lord departs His teaching body,
thus now, He welcomes the opportunity
to repay His long-drawn obligations
by calling ye all to conversactions."

Said the Food-animals (apart) : "With a Lord
our own, are we favoured ?
Indeed, a light of gold
lights Him a thousandfold,
yet He is man in the body.
Man, the bloodguilty !
Dare we rest the mad heartbeat
and gather to His gleaming feet ?..."

Lord (apart) : "Sad-eyed pilgrims,
born to be helpless victims,
may they abide in the living truth of the ages
to sustain their dying body passages."
(aloud) : "Food-animals ! Rest ye, hearts beating madly
and to this Jaina Lord's feet gather, ye all gladly."

Animals : "Many an alien tongue
like stone garlands on our necks are hung.
Yet Him we understand, and curious,
He understands us..."

Young Animals (merrily) : "Our Lord comes,
O dancing we go, with the frangipani blossoms."

Adult Animals : "Hope by misery is begot,
let us hear Him, why not ?"

Aged Animals : "Yokes of years of abuse,
what now have we to lose ?"

Shadow Animals : "Odd conceit, He casts no shadow."

Animals (chorus) : "To Him, in good hope, let us go."

Lord : "All ye come voluntarily,
indeed ye are this Lord's cherished community,
and He lifts His hand in spiritual benediction
over His own wailing legion.

Here, with breeds from the Dvaraka pen
stand newcomers, in common begotten
for they, too, are food for flesh-eaters brutal
—alas, food needless for survival
as verified by the unbroken generations of Jainism
under vow of harmless diet in a full circle of altruism.

Now ye food-animals stand careworn,
by doubt and misery pierced as by a double thorn.
Yet soon ye shall claim the religion of *Ahimsā*,
unsealed for all, no matter the body-stigma.
O joy ! In the sweet truth of the Jinas' legacy
ye shall know, your souls too may go free.

Crystal waters
ye share, one with all others.
Likewise, near that one,
all others shall overhear each spiritual lesson
till, as monsoon buds differ from thorny fodder,
so ye shall know, souls differ from matter.

This Lord appreciates that each animal,
in body and soul, stands apart as an individual.
As well, Jainism always adapts its message
to its hearer's reasoning age.
Thus, for the first student,
'tis a simple lesson for a simple innocent."

Animals : "Dare we believe we have a Lord ?
O hurry Him to His pledged word."

Lord (with spiritual love, always) : "Joy of life,
Ye Lamb, alas, ye stumble to the knife.
'Tis stern to curb a dancing joy,
but ye must know that nothing can destroy
the everlasting soul within
ye curling lambskin.
Fareway,
yet must ye comfort from this yesterday."

Said the Lamb (nicely) : "What is yesterday ?
My Lord, is it a festival day ?"

Lord : "Newborn temple of body,
what do ye perceive of infinity ?
Be still, Ye Innocent,
and heed to your Lord for the moment."

Lamb : "Ye talk like our mothers
when came the unwashed strangers."

Lord : "To the dear mothers, what said ye ?"

Lamb : "I danced on the wind with the frangipani."

Lord (apart) : "How to teach this flighty creature
to hold to spiritual treasure ?
Under the knife, the cry is for mercy,
so for that dread hour must the Jaina lesson be...
Dear Lamb ! A brief sunrise of frolic
gives way to a gushing red noon of panic.
Likewise, behold
how ye are shackled by your Lord's handhold."

Shadow Animals (quivering) : "Snare !
Alas, 'twill be a frothing nightmare."

Lord : "Jaina lesson to explain,
now your liberty ye regain."

Lamb : "Free, free
to dance with the blowing frangipani."

Lord : "And what of the lesson, ye giddy one ?"

Lamb : "My Lord, what lesson ?"

Lord (with loving emphasis) : "Be thankful
that ye are everlasing soul.
Ye Lamb ! Ye shall be released from pain.
Ye Lamb ! Ye shall be born again."

Lamb (dancing) : "O sunshine
that a shining new life be mine."

Lord : "May this truth of the Jaina religion
move ye lamb towards self-realization,
for ye are your very own soul in the eternity
of the Jaina reality."

Said the Lord : "Crown of tender horns,
Ye Goat, alas, for ye tomorrow mourns—"

Said the Goat (brashly) : "Lord !
Mid sturdy men, are ye armoured.
Thick of neck, outspread of shoulder,
what thorn-gates your head could plunder."

Lord (mildly) : "Know ye why
outrage makes red your youthful eye ?"

Goat : "My boy playmate
winked at the leg-hook at the gate
Little he cared
that jolly hours we had shared,
and in my turn, I swore fury to all deceivers
like the fury of our fighting fathers."

Lord : "Of the fathers, what last did ye see ?"

Goat : "Dragged off were they, in a dust of glory."

Lord (apart) : "How to convince this hotblooded scion
that a warrior's strength is a deception ?
His eye must open wide
to the Jaina view that soul, now body, be glorified...
Dear Goat ! Recognize
this hardy body that ye idolize,
with its 1008 auspicious marks
crumbles too, to death, a paradox
till ye behold all living beings adrift
on the river of time, fatefully swift."

Goat : "I fight till I die !"

Lord : "Foolhard outcry."

Goat : "Foolish
to wager your blood for the life ye cherish ?"

Lord : "This beyond your scant years to understand
the scriptural prudence of your Lord's reprimand.
Only to death, shall ye youngster confess
that lifeblood is lifeless."

Goat : "No compromise ?
No haughty blow for a helpless death-prize ?"

Lord : "Ofttimes
the body is absolutely helpless under alien crimes."
(*with mild emphasis*) : "Yet the soul is not helpless
if the body lives by the vow of harmlessness,
—if even to your own self, ye heed
non-injury in thought, word and deed.
Ye Goat ! By the vow, ye give mercy.
Ye Goat ! Your future shall inherit your past clemency."

Goat (*subdued*) : "When I fall,
I ask ye Lord's tidings be my renewal."

Lord : "May this truth of the Jaina religion
move ye goat towards self-realization,
for ye are your own peaceable soul in the reality
of the Jaina eternity."

Said the Lord : "Earth-mother,
Ye Cow, bestowing a milk-ocean forever,
mournful eye and stumbling gait
betray that man fixes on ye an arrogant weight.
Yet your gentle name gives him rest from labour,
O hushed and purple cowdust hour."

Said the Cow (*heartsick*) : "Lord knows
the memories creeping in the shadows,
precious little faces, woeful little calls
of my dear babes, lost beyond the mudwalls."

Lord (*apart*) : "How to ease this mother-heart
of anguish as her little ones depart ?
Solace must be

in the Jaina prophetic sight of self-continuity. .
Dear Cow ! Know ye, life is short.
At best, 'tis thorns of discomfort,
at worst, 'tis weeping
for the little ones beyond your safekeeping."

Cow : "Alas,
a mother's sorrow is too much to pass."

Lord : "Come beyond sorrow,
to where your babes live tomorrow."

Cow (brightly) : "Do the tears of my heart lie ?
Do Ye declare that my soft-eared babes do not die ?"

Lord : "To die, is to live again.
As milky sunrise, 'tis as certain."

Cow (dull again) : "Sunrise, sunset,
'tis a single misery that the heart cannot forget."

Lord : "All babes are reborn, be comforted."

Cow : "Better they be reborn dead."

Lord (with soothing emphasis) : "Reborn milk-white
in bodies the mother-heart to delight.
Ye Selfless One, yield your devotion
to the all-sharing Jaina religion.
Therein your babes, with all living things.
may shelter in the rightful teachings
that all dying without private fault
bring harsh rebirths nearer to halt.
Ye Cow ! Do not ye mourn.
Ye Cow ! By cloudless waters are your babes reborn."

Cow (echoing) : " ...Cloudless waters,
O hold me to that glossy vision when my heart falters."

Lord : "May this truth of the Jaina religion
move ye cow towards self-realization,
for ye are your own everliving soul in the eternity
of the Jaina reality."

Said the Lord : "Servant of the caravan,
Ye Camel, in long-headed wonder at the cosmic plan,
your Lord is obliged to answer
the puzzles of ye rumbling thinker."

Said the Camel (gruff) : "Why ? —a Lord splendid
and a camel, ignobly stupid ?"

Lord : "Higher values there are, than intellect."

Camel : "Compassion, dare I elect ?"

Lord (apart) : "How to solve this long-suffering dilemma
by plain-spoken evidence of the law of *karma* ?
Jainism must be like a lodestar, revelant
to the drudgery of this desert servant...
Dear Camel ! Recall the tether,
keen-edged, till ye accept being bound together.
Know tether as *karma*, the self-inflicted fate
that your past, present and future lives create.
'Tis your *karma*, the explanation
for cycle of births and deaths, your transmigration.
Thus *karma* makes your soul dwell
properly for the moment, in the body of a camel."

Camel : "So justly a victim suffers his past-life lapse.
Why ? —alms to succor his present-life mishaps ?"

Lord : "By certain karmic rules,
the sufferer deserves the malignity of fools."
(Deep-toned) : "Yet, woe to the instrument
of self-appointed karmic judgment !
Karma
puts us beside the suffering pariah,
and how we treat this victim
defines our own futures, sun-bright or grim.
Only if we give our best compassion
do we take good *karma* for our companion."
(after a pause, simply) : "Soul is pure,
aim of life is return to its original nature,
and the Jinas' path to purity
gives all living things a heartfelt charity."

Camel : "Why ? —soul is pure.
why does it tangle itself in misadventure ?"

Lord : "Ye Thinker, what is your dream of bliss ?"

Camel : "Emerald oasis !"

Lord : "Well-founded ? or a mirage's filmy veil ?"

Camel : "Alas, both fade behind the caravan on the trail."

Lord : "And what pulls the wasted foot onward ?"

Camel : "Why, dream of the oases windward."

Lord : "Thus does the soul shatter
its purity, by its voluntary association with matter.
Like a cloud obscures the sun,
likewise *karma* obscures the soul's location.
Soul, O questing
till it realizes self is within, all else is flittering.

Camel : "Ye explain
why life and death are saltish wells of pain."
(*pondering*) : "Why ? —why are we reborn ignorant
of past-life evil that makes us a future-life servant ?
If we had soul-memory of devilry done,
we'd avoid a reappearing mirage on our horizon !"

Lord : "Good is done for the goodness of it,
not for a self-serving benefit.
Have ye not been overloaded by a greedy hand
with owner in philanthropy otherwise grand ?
In some life, his greed shall weigh like ironwood
against the froth of his public good.
Often
today's prosperity is tomorrow's karmic burden !
Lesson of good for its own sake must be learned fully,
thus rebirth is the first necessity.
In workaday practice,
karma and transmigration forge the perfect justice."

Camel : "Sandstorm to my mind,
a swirling justice so designed."

Lord : " Ye Camel ! Ye are under a retributive star.
Ye Camel ! What ye were ...yields what ye are."

Camel : "Many-sided, Ye lay a bag of thought on me.
Welcome, plodding hours, to ponder my soul's heredity."

Lord : "May this truth of the Jaina religion
move ye camel towards self-realization,
for ye are your own unchanging soul in the reality
of the Jaina eternity."

Said the Lord : "Sadly wayworn,
Ye Bullock, on crumbling hooves forlorn,
as once a man, twice a child,
by the years, so are ye exiled."

Said the Bullock (burnt-out) : "Past my day
and night won't come, O pray
old bones crumble to dust
beyond tooth and claw of a flesh-eater's lust."

Other Animals (drawing back) : "Creaking
old voice, 'tis as our tomorrows speaking."

Lord (apart) : "How to comfort this time-worn melancholy
that reflects on the indwelling soul, darkly ?
Let the bright Jaina religion
light up the oldster's twilight of desolation ..."
(aloud) : "Dear Bullock ! Plucky ye were, in copper noon,
brittle famine and green-stinging monsoon.
Now be your ebbing years content,
for good service be your new-life ornament."

Bullock : "Tis old scars I suffer."

Lord : "Reason for faith in the rebirth encounter."

Bullock : "Fancy oratory on my back was laid
along with the scourge, by which my scars were made."

Lord : "Compassion
is the mother-vow of your Lord's religion.
Jaina devotee

grants every creature its right to live in dignity.
Jaina prayer, O merciful :
'May all living things be blissful'.
In fact, the devotee gives up his body-residence
before he gives up the Jaina non-violence.
Dear Bullock, freely trade your yoke for a garland
of the 3 Jaina Jewels, and understand
Right Faith, Knowledge and Conduct adorn ye
with unfading spiritual mastery.
Savior
then ye are, of your soul's inner space of splendor."

Bullock (*like old ashes, grey*) : "No lack of courage
to pull out the cart for my Lord's pilgrimage,
but 'tis old bones. Alas, forgive me,
I fall to sleep, feebly."

Lord (*soft-toned*) : "Ye Bullock, ye are not alone.
Ye Bullock, the religion of *Ahimsā* calls ye its own."

Bullock (*muffled*) : "I dream His voice,
O my soul, rejoice, rejoice..."

Lord : "May this truth of the Jaina religion
move ye bullock towards self-realization,
for ye are your own ageless soul in the eternity
of the Jaina reality."

Said the Lord : "Shadow of grace,
Ye Blackbuck, from a greenleaf shadow place,
now ye are the last seeker,
and of what alarms are ye speaker ?"

Said the Blackbuck (*quivering*) : "Festival
wherein the forest is a blood-river of betrayal.
'Tis the demons' merrymaking,
but 'tis the breath of life we are forsaking."

Lord (*apart*) : "How to compose this distress
of heart-pounding fears, endless ?
Again, the placid creed of the Jaina religion
shall pacify an inborn agitation..."
(*aloud*) : Dear Blackbuck ! For meet reason,

ye shudder at the unrully hunter's treason.
Yet now, a deathless forest enter ye
—forest of Jaina tranquility,
wherein every living thing
lives in restful soul, never-ending."

Blackbuck : "Do I live beyond the arrow ?"
Lord : "Beyond today, is there not tomorrow ?"

Blackbuck : "Tomorrow 'twill be said,
'He was here yesterday, today he is dead,
a moment in time, arrow-struck,
by name, Blackbuck'."

Lord : "Task, to renounce a solid body
in favour of a vapoury soul-entity.
Yet, as the forest bulbul falls silent
and ye flee mid a shadowland of torment,
know ye, no dwelling place
secures the body from death's long-armed embrace."

Blackbuck (sadly thoughtful) : "Alas, crying
leap into my black fear of dying."

Lord : "Ye conquer death, ye admit,
when conquer ye the fear of it.
Against fear's arrow, an enduring protection
is the inward shield of the Jaina religion.
For dying is but taking rebirth—in the Jaina view
a journey that the worthy soul shall stoutly continue."

Blackbuck : "Alas, my shame
that worthless is poor Blackbuck's name."

Lord : "'Tis Jaina doctrine,
one lifetime does not failure nor success determine."
(*with gentle emphasis*) : "But in its life or death,
no creature fears your herblike breath.
So be ye remembering,
the earth is not the sadder for Blackbuck's being."

Blackbuck : "Then may my death-wish be
that likewise, my future lives give no injury."

Lord : "Ye High-minded !
Your spiritual progress is not wasted
for every step carries over into coming lives.
O joy, that your merit survives.
Ye Blackbuck ! Ye are betrayed by the body.
Ye Blackbuck ! Your soul is your faithful identity."

Blackbuck : "O survivor
of my murky hour of death terror."

Lord : "May this truth of the Jaina religion
move ye blackbuck towards self-realization,
for ye are your own duantless soul in the reality
of the Jaina eternity."

(Now all the animals have spoken,
still their circle is unbroken
and their eyes are mirrors, silvery and patient,
as the Lord, all-knowing, awaits their consent.)

Said the Camel (*at long last*) : "...Not vengeance,
lest I take on his burden of ignorance.
Yet *karma*
grants justice to camel-driver or rajah,
so will our Lord tell
His vision of this flesh-eater in hell ?"

Said the Lord (*apart*) : "Harsh answer
for meek ears is hardly proper...
Ye Vegetarians ! 'Tis futile
that ye attend the end result of carnivores' evil.
Thus fix your kindly gaze upward
on the floating white islands of celestial reward.
Ye Camel,
prepare yourself for a vision of hell
Flesh-eater, dying and plunging downward into
a smoky pit that demons guard
—demons jolly at their trick
with hellfire and a roasting stick.[1]

[1]Reference : Lalwani, Prof. K. C., translator, *Uttaradhyayana Sutra*, p. 215, Calcutta, 1977.

In the vile-green glow,
the flesh-eater hears his own echo :
'What's a man to eat, without meat ?
Let eunuch and beggar the flaccid rice eat,
sons and gold are my flesh-eating testament.
Onward ! to my gut's enjoyment !"

On the command, a jolly demon
hacks the flesh-eater's flesh to crimson.
Then, in bond to his imbecile boast,
his very own flesh, the demons roast !
...Slowly all 7 hells begin to gloat...
His very own flesh is forced down his throat !

His eye weeps blood, for now he knows
a man reaps what he sows...
'Tis retribution : till he learns his lesson well,
of his own flesh, the flesh-eater eats in hell."

Camel (hushed) : "O gratitude,
that this animal body eats non-animal food."

Lord : "Rightly
ye shelter in the temple of a vegetarian body."

Camel : "Man, the spiritually insane !
Better in a lowborn body I remain.

Lord : "Whatever state of existence be your renewal,
infernal, sub-human, human or celestial,
remember, all may strive equally
on the Jinas' footpath to Deity.

But, of that path hewn from living rock,
ye have heard many times, for all lessons interlock.
To disband now, would ye care ?
and with your kin, your pilgrimage to share ?"

(Sky grows amber in the west,
a night bird calls from the forest,
still the food-animals linger
at the lotus feet of their Jaina Teacher.)

Said the Lord : "A last counsel,
Dear Ones, then 'tis farewell...

Life-span is short, so hasten ye to spiritual effort,
for the soul, by its present nature
pre-arranges its future.
'Tis the Jinas' law :
as from love and hatred ye withdraw,
ye pass from fleshly transmigration
into the enduring free form of liberation.
Verily, at the end of the path the Jinas trod,
ye, too, are Soul-God.

Patient Ones, as waters deeply flowing,
mystic depths are beyond your present knowing.
Just know, beyond the leg-hook and the tether
and the animal-misery binding ye all together,
ye each are a pure and perfect soul,
O blissful.

Dear Ones...at the deathblow moment,
as best ye can, hold non-attachment.
Yes, to your butcher and to your body
hold the non-attachement of the saintly."
(*soft-toned*) : "Peace
at death shall release
the soul to a serene rebirth
outside of time on this wretched earth.

Alas,
earth's red monsoon does not pass.
In the forest, a Gir lion
slays a mother's child in savage passion,
and by the boulder, a granite snake
stings a saint, for evil's sake.

Shame to man's face ! Is he superior
when he sinks to a vulture's behavior ?
Shame ! He disregards brazenly
that human birthright is living with earth peacefully.

Yet every soul has the potential
to quit itself of its body-material.

Even a flesh-eater partly rubs out his raw *karma*
if anew he lives, by vow of '*ahimsā paramo dharmah*'.[a]

O wondrous non-injury,
all living things flowing on crystal waters of harmony."

Said the Food-animals (mellow) : "On waters at His feet
our soul-reflections now we meet.
Body come, body go,
'tis everliving soul now we follow."

Lord (with deep spiritual love) : "O grace,
that soul becomes your refuge-place."

Animals (chorus) : "In the truth of His religion
we move towards self-realization,
for our Lord pledges our homecomings
to our souls, O blissful dwellings."

Lord : "Ever
the sweet Jaina truth ye remember.
Ye Food-animals all,
souls ye are, ye are souls eternal..."

Then the Lord withdrew His teaching presence
and He passed back into His inward silence.

'Twas in Bharatavarsa, circa 1500 B.C.,
that food-animals beheld their path to spirituality.

Praise to the Wayshower, the Lord Nemi.

[a] Venerable Jaina motto in Prakrit ; 'Non-violence is the highest religion'.

THE RENUNCIATION OF NEMI

a dance drama

by

Ganesh Lalwani

translated into English

by

Paresh Chandra Dasgupta

SCENE 1

[A glade. The darkness of night is slowly disappearing. The daughters of the woodland, the Vanabalas (nymphs), dance and sing]

Gladness to-day lilts in singing,
Gladness to-day in soul is ringing,
Gladness wafts in the air,
Gladness is felt by breathes inhaled.
Gladness transcends the firmament blue,
Gladness in water murmurs the clue,
Gladness echoes in the rustling leaves,
The heart by the scent of flowers feels regaled.

[Suddenly far-away sound of trumpets and a noise are heard. The woodland daughters feel alert. It is being heard from afar]

To extriminate you all
In the sylvan peace
The murderous hunters have swooped
With strength of retainers and grouped.
O ye animals of the wood,
Fly away, away
So as you may
And deeper in the forest lay.

[The Vanabalas are quickly leaving the glade. The deer, the hare, the boar and other animals are running away. The leader of the hunters is charging on the stage. His retinue are acting the manoeuvre of surrounding the forest. The leader, the captain of the royal hunters, is singing with a dance]

Hooray, hooray, hooray !
Encircle the wood in the fray,
None must escape, I say,
Hooray, hooray, hooray !
A heavy feast is waiting,
This we have come for arranging,
We have the king's order
Whom we need fear ?
Hooray, hooray, hooray !

Do, do make haste,
Who can tell best
How many deer, boar and hare
We have to catch and care ?
Hooray, hooray, hooray !
It is for the marriage of the Princess,
Giving everything more or less
Something we shall take
A great hoard in our home to make.
Hooray, hooray, hooray !

[In the act of running a baby deer is caught by its antler in a net]

Baby deer : What it is ? What it is ?
My antler I can't release,
While trying to gain freedom of mine,
More entangled I find the twine,
What shall I do,
What shall I do,
Alas, alas, alas !
O my mother, mother, mother !

Leader of the hunters : Ha, ha, ha !
What a fun !
Call your mother
For the last time,
Death is awaiting for you,
None can save your life.
Ha, ha, ha !

[Hearing the call of the helpless baby deer the mother deer is running down to the spot]

Mother deer : My little one, where are you ?
Where are you ?

Leader of the hunters : Ha, ha, ha !

Mother deer : [Gazing at her baby]
Child, what ill-fate is thine--
So tremulously gasping you are,

Your mouth is foaming,
And your head is drooping
on the ground.
This is an ill destiny sheer,
You are bound for the kill,
How shall I bear ?
Alas, alas, alas !

Leader of the hunters : [Coming close to the mother deer]
Thou need not, need not care,
This grief and pain to bear,
To spare you of these here
Shall also with the child take you there.

Mother deer : Do that, do that I implore thee,
Only make the little one free,
It doesn't know what is meant,
Being now so innocent.

Leader of the hunters : Don't, don't tell me your feelings,
As it is so young
Its flesh will be tasty.

Company of the hunters : Ah ! Right you have told, right.

Leader of the hunters : Make haste, make haste,
Catch her best,
Lest
She flies.

Mother deer : You need not catch me thus,
I have surrendered my self.

Leader of the hunters : Make haste, make haste, make haste.
[The hunters have seized her]

Baby deer : O mother, mother, mother !

Leader of the hunters : [Laughs] Ha, ha, ha !

[In the meantime a rabbit is trying to run away. A hunter attempts to shoot it with a dart]

Rabbit : Do not, oh, do not kill me—
Too poor a life I have got
To stand your arrow shot.
If hurt, can't bear, can't bear,
I beg for your mercy again,
Allow my life to remain.

Leader of the hunters : Do not, do not kill by arrow,
Only take him at any rate,
Then put him in a basket
And carry him home.

[The hunters are moving to catch him. The rabbit is trying to escape, but it fails]

Rabbit : What becomes of me,
What becomes of me,
Why I can't move my legs ?

Leader of the hunters : Glue has been poured there.
Don't be afraid, you hear,
We shan't, we shan't kill you,
Only to home you will be taken
And then
To the cook you will be handed
Who will comply what I say,
No, no not to kill you,
But while you live
To flay.

[The hunters are bringing animals for food from the four quarters of the forest]

SCENE 2

[The Sakhis, the female companions, of princess Rajimati are singing and dancing in the palace]

To our doors the spring has arrived—
Its invitation is written
In the Asoka and the Kimsuka flowers,
That the forest here and regions afar
Have derived.
Awakes the flower Madhumalati,
Awakes the flower Madhavika,
The heart feels the rhyme
In the nectarsome spring revived.
O ye, arrange the welcome-tray.
with the garland woven of flowers
that bloom and spray,
We shall have to welcome the traveller
Who will stand before our doors today.

[With two female companions Rajimati comes. Rajimati dances and sings]

Rajimati : Dear friends,
Bedeck me with ornaments of flowers,
Entwine my fragrant hair
And bind strings of blossoms around
my heaped bun,

Hang on my arms
The smiling Mallika,
Care to attach Siris to my ear-lobes,
On my girdle
Attach the Nilmani flowers
That resemble the sapohire blue
And redden my feet
With scarlet fluid
Never adequate for the desire.

[The female companions of the princess perform a dance around her]

Female companions : We shall, we shall
decorate you
[Since] thou art the golden curve
of the moon
in the blue sky.
We shall encircle your coif
with a string of blossoms,
Adorn your ears with Siris,
The arms with Mallika
And shall paint your breasts
with pollen of flowers.
Attaching to your girdle
the bluebell showers
Shall give scarlet paints
to your feet.
When thou wilt stand at his left
in bridal attire
With steps light and soft
Will seem like a creeper of golden fire
Entwining a Tamala tree
that stands aloft.

[The female companions are acting as if they are adorning Rajimati]

Rajimati : What a tremor of sweet anticipation
In my limbs,
What an intense expectation.
Why this tearful emotion,
Why a flood of joyous passion ?

[Suddenly she feels startled]

But what is this—
Why my right arm is shaking ?
Why the Mallilka blossoms are falling ?
Some inauspicious Rahu[1]
Seems has flown anew
to devour the full moon
Crossing the limits of the sky.

[1] The ascending node, a demon's head said to be the cause of eclipse.

Why my timid heart is trembling ?
Why I am feeling afraid ?
Why the dark cloud is covering
the full moon of delight ?

[The female companions of Rajimati surround her]

Female companions : That is nothing, that is nothing dear,
There is no reason for this fear.
Thou art so lucky O princess,
Sing songs of happiness,
The groom of impeccable manly glory
Is anxiously coming
To surrender to your feet
his own self no less.

[The other female companions are approaching]

Other female companions : Make haste, make haste,
Has almost arrived
The procession of marriage,
Make haste, make haste,
O hear ye the beats of drums,
O hear ye the sounds that prove...

Female companions : Ready we are,
Let us go, let us move.

[All are going away]

SCENE 3

[Royal highway. The marriage procession is slowly advancing towards the palace of Rajimati. Aristanemi is trying to hear something]

Aristanemi : Halt, halt the chariot here.
Where from is coming the
plaintive cry I hear,
As if many are lamenting
Rending the heart.

Charioteer : O prince, this is nothing,
Only the cry of lament
That comes from wild animals
caged there after gathering.

Aristanemi : Perchance you can tell me
Why those animals are bound
here be ?

Charioteer : In the marriage festive
The kings who have come
to join and wait,
For their food in banquet.
As the captured creatures are
afraid of their lives,
Their painful cry revives.
Only this.

Aristanemi : You say, only this...
No, no Yodhajit,
It is not fair
To kill so many creatures
For only trivial pleasures.
In the world under the Sun
None wants to die.
Even a small injury
Causes so much agony,
As if the pangs of death.
Never never this I prefer
For pleasure much afar.

Charioteer : To remove this sorrow
Give your order prince,
They will all be freed.

Aristanemi : Will be set free,
But how they will be rescued
From the eternal stream of
life and death ?
No, no, no !
Slowly is receding away
this universe

Like a shadow,
Only I am viewing death
As waves in all directions.

[Aristanemi is alighting from his horse-drawn chariot]

Charioteer : Whither art thou going, O prince,
Yonder Rajimati
With all her beauty
Is waiting for you
With her garland due for your welcome.
There is an instruction for me
To run the chariot swiftly.

Aristanemi : Take away my chariot,
ye hear !
The unknown ones
Are beckoning,
I shall have to go far away
Across a distance beyond reckoning
On the peak of the mountain there.
Hear ye, they are chanting a song.

[Song]

Soul of glory, We pray to thee,
Make us, make us free.
Unbound the fetter,
Give freedom from fear,
Victory to thine, victory to thine !
O thy soul of endless virtue,
The sad and oppressed earth
Is calling you true,
Take away our dross and all indignity,
Tell us the words of infinity
Within the life
Give us freedom.
Let victory there be, victory be thine !

Charioteer : O prince,
If you must go away
This will break
the heart of Rajimati.

[Aristanemi is putting off his ornaments and jewellery. Krsna, his cousin brother, and his other relatives and friends are coming to the place]

Aristanemi : Not for me
Is woman's loving care,
Neither the pleasure,
Nor the wealth to share,
I will bring the ambrosia
on this earth's breadth
And will overcome the very death.

Krsna : That way is hard
as the edge of blade,
Will you make it prince ?
None has ever conquered
the death
Without dying himself.

Aristanemi : By dying
I will conquer death.
This is my vow
O Krsna,
Give me your blessings.

Krsna : I am blessing you—
wish you will succeed.

SCENE 4

[The women's apartment in a palace. Rajimati is surrounded by her companions]

Rajimati : The hour of the cow-dust
Is passing away,
Why the traveller has not yet
come to my door ?
I do not know, why my right arm
is trembling again and again ?
And my right eye is feeling
the same tremore ?

Why my heart is throbbing
with uncertainty ?
Why in the darkness of night
a fear I harbour ?
Why a speechless lament
is trying to voice
An untold sadness
From what is the sea
of eternal death,
Its other shore?

[A female companion is entering]

Female companion : My darling friend,
What I know that is not to tell.
The jar of ambrosia
is broken into bits,
The destiny has done it
differently.
My darling friend,
that is not to tell.

Rajimati : Tell me my darling friend,
tell me, tell me—
Do not keep me in unknown fear
only to make me weaker.
Tell me my darling friend,
tell me, tell me.
However immense
the ill-luck be
All will have to be borne by me,
Only tell—
Is he really well ?

Female companion : About his good tidings
and all
How shall I utter—
Impeding my throat
Is my tearful agony
That is hard to bear.
While coming on the way

He has renounced the world
And as a hermit
Has retired to the Raivatacal.

Rajimati : What have you told,
my darling friend,
What have you told !

[Rajimati faints]

Female companions : Bring water friends,
bring water.

[The female companions are nursing Rajimati. Ugrasena, Krsna, Rathanemi and the mother of Rajimati are all coming to the spot]
[Echoes the song]

An uprooted creeper
She is lying on the floor,
Like a deer
Hurt by a sharp arrow.
The full moon
Seems to have been
Eclipsed by Rahu
In the blue heaven.

[Rajimati is returning to consciousness]

Mother of Rajimati : Don't weep, don't weep, my daughter,
Though your destiny is shrewdly written,
I shall arrange your marriage again.
Within the Vrsni clan
There are so many youths and princes,
They will feel grateful
to your attention fair.
Don't weep, don't weep, my daughter,
The fate so different has though
done my dear.

Rathanemi : If I am graced by your love,
Shall feel myself grateful.

Rajimati : I am no article for sale
to be done,
My love remains for only one.
No, no, no that is impossible—
I belong to him alone.
To whom my mind and mortal frame
Have been already lain.
His way is the way of mine—
[Since] life and youth are both
changeful so.
Permit me,
I shall renounce the worldly life
And to Raivatacal shall go.

Rathanemi : O thou beauteous slim,
So young you are,
How you will carry
The burden of your youth ?
Accept me
I shall give you protection.

Mother of Rajimati : Rightly spoken
O thou son of the Vrsnis.

Female companions : Aye, aye, aye !

Rajimati : Fie, fie, fie !
Can any body take back the food
once disgorged ?
Without substance the world is,
True is love,
I am his, I am his, I am his—
I am no trader for pleasure
of men.

Krsna : Praised be ye, praised be ye,
O maiden !

[Rajimati is discarding her jewellery one by one]

SCENE 5

[Raivatacal. Aristanemi is deep in meditation on the mountain. Rajimati is surrendering herself at his feet]

Rajimati : O glorious life,
O glorious life,
To your life
My life I surrender.
I draw an end to the life for me,
Let the river unite
with the sea,
And let to-day my life
in its completion
All sweetness derive.

The curtain falls.

The Ardhakathānaka of Banarasidas is a true autobiography with its casual observations and the feelings of an enquiring soul within a society much engaged in pursuits of desire, gain and power. Though engaged in his own field Banarasidas could find moments for contemplation of subjects in the strange ways of life. The tyranny of the officers of the Mughal emperors that has been depicted by him with realism will recall the ironical comment of poet Mukundaram of Bengal who in his brief autobiographical details in Candimangal states that during the rule of Man Singh, the general of Akbar, in Bengal and Orissa, his subjects living within the jurisdiction of the authority of one Mahmud Sarif suffered due to their own sins. Mukundaram tells with disgust how the business and the economy of the nation were put into confusion by the whims of administration and the executives. The history knows that the Bengal poet fled Damunya for food and protection as the author of the Ardhakathānaka fled Jaunpur. Actually Banarasidas, could survive in those days for courage, presence of mind and wisdom. One may say that like the French poet Charles Pierre Baudelaire he describes his feelings with a candour. His work is both scintillating and quiet in appeal, while in truth he was like a poet inwardly beyond all sorrow, sins, bondage and the elements of masquerade, the guise of social hypocrisy. Can he be even described as an Existentialist in terms of the much later philosophy of Satre? Banarasidas was surprisingly knowledgeable adventurer on the dusty roads of Mughal cities and on the unending trace in the shades of forests where he moved with his humour, comprehension and merchandise.

In view of the unique importance of the Ardhakathānaka I feel an obligation to publish some portions from the Introduction of the book to make them available to the readers.

—Editor

Half A Tale

The Ardhakathānaka
translated, introduced and annoted by
Mukund Lath

Illustrations by Ganesh Pyne

Rajasthan Prakrit Bharati Sansthan
Jaipur

$ 25
Rs. 150

from introduction half a tale:

The *Ardhakathānaka* is a remarkable work. Written during the heyday of the Mughal rule in 1641 A.D., it is perhaps the only autobiography in the Indian tradition. Banarasi, its author, was evidently working without precedents. Yet he was surprisingly cognisant of the complexity of his task and the depth of introspection it needed. We find him commenting at the end of his narrative :

"In a man's life there is much that is too subtle to be palpable... Even in the tiny span of a day a man passes through myriad states of consciousness. The all-knowing Kevalin can perceive them, but even he cannot describe them in their fullness."

Banarasi was 55 years old when he wrote this autobiography. He called it the *Ardhakathānaka*, or Half A Tale, for he thought he had lived only half the total span of life allotted to man, which according to an ancient Jain tradition he quotes, is 110 years. However, he did not much outlive the completion of his Half A Tale and so what we have is, in effect, a full story.

Banarasi was a Jain Merchant born in the enterprising clan of the Srimals, who were keen businessmen, spread in Mughal times almost all over North India, with flourishing communities in every major town. Some Srimals held fairly important official posts in Muslim courts.

Born in A.D. 1586 with Akbar ruling at the prime of his power Banarasi spanned some of the most thriving years of the Mughal rule.

His childhood and adolescence were spent in Jaunpur, a town on the river Gomati, about 70 miles from Banaras, where his father was a jeweller. A merchant by training and profession, Banarasi was also a precocious poet and writer from early youth. His first work, a juvenile production, was a collection of love poems which he later threw away into the river in a fit of moral reprobation. His mature works, most of which survive due to the collecting zeal of his friends and admirers, are mainly concerned with Jain doctrine and religion, the accent being on the inner spirit of the faith unencumbered by rigid formal ritualism.

He was initiated early, at the age of fourteen, into the more earnest pursuits of life when he developed two consuming passions. One was love, for which he went to a prostitute. The other was knowledge, which remained a more lasting passion and led him to study books on many subjects, especially religion.

Much of his later youth was spent in Agra, where he met with repeated and dismal failures in his business ventures. Once, losing his entire capital, he lived for months as a penniless recluse till rescued from penury by a close relative.

Already at nineteen he realised the futility of love after experiencing a sudden conversion to religion. He became a pious observer of all the precepts of his faith, remaining for years a fastidious, ritual-practising Jain. Later, at the age of 35, he lost all faith in ritual practices and other extraneous duties and beliefs enjoined by religion, after another spiritual upheaval. He now began to denounce externalities in religion, making fun of them with unholy joy. He was drawn to a new, rising protestant movement among the Jains, called Adhyatma, which propagated a contemplative, inward-looking religion. He soon became its leader. With him the Adhyatma movement grew into an important heterodoxy. The best testimony to his crucial contribution to the movement is that its orthodox opponents named it the 'Banarasi heresy'. The Adhyatma movement gave rise to a distinct Jain sect, the Terapanth sect of the Digambaras, which today is a powerful group with a large following. The Terapanth proudly declares itself an offshoot of Banarasi's Adhyatma, and revers him as its Adiguru : the founder teacher.

The man himself was fascinating. All through life he retained a rare sense of joy and abandon. During his lean period in Agra, when

he had no money even for his next meal, he used to play host every evening to a group of lively friends, singing love ballads and making light-hearted conversation. At the age of 55, as a committed religious leader among the Jains, one of the most solemn and ascetic of religious groups, he still had this irrepressible effervescence of character. "I often break into a dance when I am alone", he confesses at the end of his tale, as he gives his readers a short resume of his 'present temper', adding that he loved to act the jester and could not resist telling tall tales when in the right company.

The *Ardhakathānaka* has been called the life of a common man, a man belonging to the middle class. And certainly Banarasi lived a life closer to the common lot than the other Mughal memoir writers with whom we are familiar. We get from him a rare flavour of how it must have been to live and work as a modest merchant in Mughal cities, travel on the adventurous Mughal roads, buy and sell in the precarious Mughal markets and suffer sudden, unwarranted persecution at the hands of corrupt Mughal officials or whimsical Mughal emperors.

...Banarasi's story is an invaluable witness to the pervasiveness of the community in the life of an individual. His community defined his manner of life as well as his interests, demarcating also the social arena within which he had meaningful human relations. The people he loved and befriended, those from whom he learnt or those he taught, his partners in business, those amidst whom or with whom he worked and those with whom he had dealings, were all, with few exceptions, people of his community. Even his enemies and opponents, people with whom he fought with any zeal or against whom he harboured any passionate resentment, were fellowmen belonging to his community. The social world beyond was, in comparison, shadowy, uncertain, even uncanny. It was a world he had to come to terms with but which was outside the enclosed little universe to which he could respond with warmth, sensitivity and understanding. It tended often to shade into the senseless when it eluded his scheme of meaning and he could not quite fathom its workings. Twice during his life time, his community had to face severe and arbitrary persecution at the hands of the Mughal rulers. His fellow clansmen and traders had to flee from Jaunpur with their lives, biding time till things returned to normal once again. Banarasi seems only half aware of the reasons for the sudden atrocities which were cruelly unleashed on his fellow merchants, nor did he really care to enquire. These were for him events as senseless as a natural calamity and to be borne as such with patience and fortitude.

I was unaware of the *Ardhakathānaka* till two years ago, when a friend gave me a copy of Nathuram Premi's 1957 edition of the book with the comment that it was the first autobiography in Hindi written before modern times.

This was really intriguing. Today the influence of the West has made the writing of autobiography common enough, but Indian writings of the pre-modern period are devoid of personal accounts except for superficial notices, incidentally recorded, which give no more than a man's parentage, genealogy, social role, status, and the like. But true autobiography in which a man attempts to lay bare his life, revealing himself through his actions, aspirations and strivings, is completely missing.

...the emergence of the *Ardhakathānaka*, a full-fledged autobiography, therefore, certainly occasions surprise. Banarasi's own reason for writing it is startingly simple : it occured to him, he says that he should narrate the events of his own life. And he did. He mentions no examples or models which might have influenced him in his endeavour. He was a highly educated man, well-read in many subjects. In fact, he gives us a fairly exhaustive list of the books he had studied. None even distantly approach the autobiography. Though he had learnt Sanskrit, he did not seem to have read many literary works in the language and remained unfamiliar with Bana, Dandin and others who might have provided him with an example, however embryonic. His taste in literature appears to have been confined to poems and ballads in Hindi. This whole vernacular literature was almost completely devoid of autobiographical interest and could not have provided him with impulse for his unusual attempt. His autobiography is manifestly an isolated expression which cannot be forced into any traditional literary genre or established mode of expression.

But what, one might pertinently ask, of a Persian influence ?

...Yet Banarasi's education though considerable, followed an entirely traditional, indigenous course. He studied from scholars trained purely in the Indian system of learning.

Despite the absence of a concrete model or a tangible influence, Banarasi's effort at self-revelation is remarkably authentic and candid.

Only on two occasions does his unusually fresh self-portrayal and conspicuous candour fail him. One was an unmentionable 'sin' he had committed while living in a small village where he had taken refuge

from the deadly plague then rampant in the city of Agra. He recoils perceptibly from the thought of revealing what he had done and frankly tells us that he will just not speak on the subject. Success in business came to Banarasi late in life, after years of dismal failure. We find him quite garrulous on the subject of his losses, but he quite unexpectedly tightens his lips when it comes to speaking of how he made his gains, hiding behind a quotation from ancient wisdom literature. The dictum he quotes gives a list of nine unutterables concerning oneself, matters such as age, sexual affairs and the like, including one's riches.

Fortunately, Banarasi followed this advice only partially, or there would have been no *Ardhakathānaka*. He begins with a promise to unveil all, and seems indeed to have felt uncomfortable at having to hold something back. At the end of his story he says : "Few are willing to speak of their misdeeds, even small ones, yet I have hidden but little." He meant this obviously as an excuse for having concealed certain facts.

...Banarasi made many friends during an eventful life. He had to spend years in Agra and other towns away from his family repeatedly facing frustrations in business. He learned to depend a great deal on friends both for companionship and partnership in trade. Most of his friends, as could be expected, were men of his clan and community. And as with all of us, he made new friends with a change in interests or pursuits and the vicissitudes of his circumstances, some friends remaining more constant than others. During the final period of his life, when he wrote his autobiography, his closest companions were friends who shared with him certain heterodox religious views. In fact, at this stage of his life he was emerging as the leader of a new religious group called Adhyatma, whose members were rebellious free-thinkers protesting against the tyranny and hollowness of overformalism in their orthodox faith. Banarasi regularly met friends belonging to this group in order to discuss matters of common spiritual interest. He names five friends of this brotherhood as being particularly close to him.

Curiously, Banarasi does not mention them in the *Ardhakathānaka*, where, indeed, he speaks of his association with Adhyatma quite cursorily, only in passing as it were. But, fortunately, we know something about them from his other celebrated work, the *Samayasāranāṭaka*.

...Banarasi and his five friends formed the core of the Adhyatma group in Agra. He was at the head of this assemblage which he calls the Adhyatma Saili. The members of this emergent religious body, which was gradually acquiring a considerable following styled themselves as *Gnyātās* : 'Those who know'.

Curiously, nowhere does Banarasi speak of himself as the leader of these *Gnyātās* ...

...One may be inclined to think that he was being modest. But this seems a feeble and inadequate reason for his silence on a major aspect of his life, particularly in a work where the very purpose was to relate his life story. One would rather have expected him to be more than usually eloquent on this subject. The reason for his silence, we think, can only be understood if we take into account the audience he had in mind. He was addressing his autobiography to his Adhyatma friends, more particularly, perhaps, his five close companions. These, he knew, were only too familiar with the nature of his association with Adhyatma. He therefore, felt no need to dilate on this aspect of his life in relating to them his life story.

One leitmotive runs like a strong undercurrent throughout the *Ardhakathānaka* : Banarasi's intense involvement with religion. Though he reacted differently to it at different stages of his life, the authenticity of his involvement never wavered. For twelve years of his life before he wrote his autobiography, he had passed through a long and tortuous period of spiritual conflict. His study of certain Jain mystic tracts and the discussions he held with friends on Jain doctrines concerning the deepest religious life, convinced him that the truth of the spirit, the knowledge of which leads to liberation, lies beyond all forms, rituals and ordained conventional practices. He had a staunch faith in the stringent observances decreed by his religion, but as he became convinced of their hollowness, he began to neglect them, even to the extent of displaying rank disrespect and disdain towards them. He pondered deeply and constantly on the nature of mystic truth and his sense of the emptiness and meaninglessness of all rituals and ordained forms of religion grew with the year. But, as he confesses, he had yet no inkling of the inner truth...

In his contempt for all formal expressions of religion, he had begun to scoff even at the ways of saints and men of the spirit. In the company of some sacrilegious friends, he was wont to make indecent fun of even the highest ascetic and mystic life. The knowledge of his scandalous behaviour spread quickly, earning him considerable disrepute among the Jains of Agra...

Later he came to realize that rituals too had their place in the spiritual life, that they were stepping-stones on the way to the formless spirit, and he regretted his earlier follies. He had by now become the leader

of the Adhyatma group. ...Banarasi, in relating his story, seems to have been moved by a desire to tell them in his own words the story of what really happened and why : he wanted to tell them of the inner compulsion which he had incited him in his actions, the schism in his soul, the turmoil that was driving him; and to impress upon them that inspite of all he did, he always retained a basic honesty of purpose.

...Indeed, Banarasi went to the length, rare in Jain religious history, of deprecating the superiority of the monks. Movements of protest and reform proclaiming a purer ideal have not been unknown to Jainism; but they have been led by monks. Adhyatma in this respect, manifested an unprecedented feature. It was initiated, propagated and sustained by householders who remained active men of affairs, vigorously engaged in commerce...

The importance of Banarasi's autobiography as a historical document is undeniably immense. But it is also a sensitive human document, and our attempt has been to translate it with this idea in mind....

Prince Nemi's Longing for Eternity
—Lalwani's Opera Nemi Pravajya—

PARESH CHANDRA DASGUPTA

Perhaps, only on certain occasions to cherish a drama or an opera ceases to be a simple play, a simulation of life, and imparts an experience where the audience and those who act may feel the existence of a world like an imperishable star in outer space. To a philosopher or a poet such a play drawn from the legend of a Jaina Tirthankara may appear more enduring than mortal desire and more beautiful than the common reality of the world that only manifests before the limited tenure of existence. In the perspective of the rolling years of civilisation of the mankind which shows the increase of material progress and the path of human aspiration running or bending across landscapes of desolation or verdant plains of glory such legends promise of a love, peace and realisation more covetable than all the happiness of a paradise or any idyllic land as the one of the Hyperboreans yearned about and fabled in antiquity by the Greeks. Actually, the theme of *Nemi Pravajyā* that deals with the renunciation of Neminatha or Aristanemi, the 22nd Tirthankara, the younger cousin-brother of Krsna, has achieved a height where ascends the sun of ultimate truth with regard to the liberation of soul from all earthly attachments and thereby from the bondage of illusion and rebirths. Nemi looked towards the eternal knowledge and the freedom of soul which are much beyond the promise of a perpetual youth and the pleasures of heaven. As the account goes, Aristanemi, a Vrsni of heroic strength and personality was struck by the plaintive cries of animals gathered for food for royal banquets in connection with the proposed marriage of the noble-minded prince with Rajimati, the daughter of Ugrasena, once the king of Mathura and at this time the ruler of Girnar. The deep tone

of lament of the poor creatures moved Nemi while he was progressing to the bride's palace with colours and pageantry befitting his time as he felt that such a slaughter and cruelty were so needless and unjust for celebration of a marriage union, an occasion of love and joy. Seeing the nature of the world around him the prince stepped down from his chariot, a fit mount of splendour that could equally serve in combat as one may imagine, abandoned his jewellery and immediately renounced everything to meditate alone on mount Raivataka near Dvaraka. Seeing the proceedings from her palace or perhaps from the high ramparts of such a royal edifice built like a castle Rajimati also made up her mind and renounced the world. None could substitute her darling youth, the prince of all princes who left her before the portals of her abode to become a recluse on a lonely mountain. When Rathanemi, the brother of Aristanemi proposed to marry her in the situation she refused him outright lest the words though spoken from an admiring heart would mar the very dignity of her cherished love. No wonder Nemi longed to be a *Kevalī* by merging in the truth of eternity when Krsna, his cousin-brother, is regarded as a manifestation of Visnu in the epics and the *Purāṇas*.

It is very probable that Nemi (a shorter form of Aristanemi and Neminatha) like Parsva, the 23rd Tirthankara was also a real personality in the way of history since there are reasons to believe the historicity of Vasudeva-Krsna and the great battle of Kuruksetra. Had there been no renunciation the ancient ministrels might have added in the Kuru-Pandava story another glowing account of a mighty warrior, his glory and sacrifice in the field of arms. Perhaps, the strength and greatness of Nemi, the illustrious son of Samudravijaya, once king of Sauripur, but now ruling from Dvaraka, made him a hermit who sought the ultimate knowledge in meditation.

The tale of Nemi sung in old ballads has been presented in the form of an opera by the famed playwright Sri Ganesh Lalwani. This work will be remembered for its profundity and mystic import. With the melodious harmony of music, the lilts and cadence of words and lyrics sung and the symphony of ultimate realisation the opera carries a message as a beam of light from a distant horizon. The play was first staged in the Star Theatre in Calcutta in the morning of 11th January, 1981. Later it was again enacted in the Mahajati Sadan in Calcutta in the evening of 12th October, 1981. On both the occasions the opera was played by the students of the Jain Siksalaya of the city. Presented by girls, either very young or pretty children, it was guided and choreographed by veteran artists and musicians. The writer had the opportunity to witness the enactment of the musical play when it was staged in the Mahajati

Sadan, a well-known centre for cultural performances. It was verily satisfying or rather an experience to see *Nemi Pravajyā* that was originally published in Bengali in *Sramaṇ*, a monthly magazine, of the month of Magha, B.S. 1386 (Feb., 1980). The drama enacted by the students of the Jain Siksalaya presented its Hindi version, a free translation done by Sm. Rajkumari Begani who is litterateur already distinguished for her works specially appreciable for their lyrical contents as also a delicate style and finesse. The play begins with a scene in a glade where the nymphs of the woodland (*Vanabālās*) dance and sing in a peaceful atmosphere which was soon broken by a group of royal hunters equipped with their horns, traps and arms. The nymphs disappeared at the moment they heard the horns of the intruders who charged from all directions. These hunters who were sent for supplying meat for the royal banquet to be held to celebrate the marriage of Aristanemi and Rajimati mercilessly caught animals running or hiding with fear. The tragedy of the circumstance, as if to anticipate the realisation of the princely bridegroom, is symbolised by the condition of a hapless offspring of a deer and a rabbit characteristically innocent and timid. When the young deer tearfully called its mother and the hare being entrapped by resinous glue supplicated to the king's hunters for mercy there was only a roar of joy for the predictable delicacies of meat and the anticipated items of recipe. When all the animals required for the feast were caged and were on the way to their destination in the city Aristanemi and his entourage were proceeding to the palace of Samudravijaya. Here the cries of agony coming from the caged animals led to the renunciation of a prince who decided to adopt the life of a recluse then and there. In Lalwani's opera the love, grace and noble personality of Rajimati is beautifully etched. The legend as a theme of all times is graced with the appearance of Krsna who as the epitome of whatever that is sweet and good in the universe gave his blessings to both Aristanemi and Rajimati when individually they arrived at their own decisions amidst different settings. In the last scene of the drama Rajimati was seen as dancing before Aristanemi deeply absorbed in meditation. The dance expressed here utter devotion and surrender to the prince in his voyage to the bliss beyond existence that had just begun. This drama, when it was staged in the Mahajati Sadan captivated the audience as it did in the Star Theatre a number of months before. The writer was greatly impressed by the winsome individuality and coordination and the very sweetness of all the participants of tender age. It was moving to see that all of them took this episode with verve and sincerity. Among these pretty participants a special mention may be made of Sm. Swapna Lunia who played the role of Aristanemi that appeared credible for her freshness, elegance and dark eyes as soft and thoughtful as those with

the enchanted collyrium of love. The part of Rajimati played by Sm. Sarita Sharma truly conveyed the charm of a princess who maintained a lyrical aura and an upright personality in the midst of all formalities and ideals of a heroic age. The group of hunters represented as a rush of cavalcade with their swords slung on their waist and glittering lances held aloft was indeed a sight to see. To depict this scene Sm. Babita Bachhawat, Sm. Bina Kochar, Sm. Sunita Agarwal, Sm. Bina Rampuria, Sm. Mitu Dugar and Sm. Sarita Hirawat enacted their part with zest amidst high pitch songs and musical dialogues which seemingly echoed a charge or the hallooing of horsemen, the fury of armed predators and their callousness for life. As the leader of the hunters, Sm. Babita Bachhawat who in a chivalrous and gentler role might well pass as a Rajput lancer of feudal times added a special verve to the action. The drama acquired a special sweetness due to the dance and performance of Rajimati's companions represented by Sm. Bimala Bothra, Sm. Sarika Gupta, Sm. Nitu Dixit, Sm. Manju Jain, Sm. Sunita Bothra and Sm. Ritu Surana. The credit of making the opening scene exceptionally attractive will go to Sm. Ritu Surana, Sm. Sunita Lunia, Sm. Abha Jain, Sm. Rachana Surana, Sm. Kanak Agarwal, Sm. Sunita Bothra, Sm. Anju Golechha and Sm. Kusum Jain who presented the group dance of the *Vanabālās* along with the light steps of a mimicking monkey played by Sm. Uma Bhutra. Though the dance exuded the delight of a fairy tale as that of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of Shakespeare it put on relief the central ideal of non-violence and love. The little but at the same time delicate roles of the young deer, its mother and the rabbit played respectively by Sm. Lalita Sharma, Sm. Manju Lunia and Sm. Anju Kothari were also touchingly faithful. While reviewing the drama it is worth remembering the suggestion of a colourful procession that accompanied the chariot of prince Nemi. The procession was heralded by a standard-bearer, Sm. Anju Dugar, who was followed by the flutists, Sm. Shyamasri Agarwal and Sm. Sangita Garg, the drummers, Sm. Tara Lunia and Sm. Sarala Saraogi, the bearers of the auspicious vases(*mangala ghaṭas*), Sm. Jayashri Kochar, Sm. Laksmi Baheti, Sm. Premlata Hirawat and Sm. Purnima Jain, the horseman, Sm. Manju Baid, the flag-bearer, Sm. Sunita Jain and the companions of the bridegroom (*barāti*), Sm. Sanju Jain, Sm. Usha Sharma, Sm. Sharmila Joshi, Sm. Sharmila Jain. Among the individuals with small roles the charioteer of Nemi acted by Sm. Manju Bhura appeared charming for her elegance and winsome dignity that are in conformity with the service of one who had to be intimately associated with a prince both in peace and war, during his call of duty within his city or beyond its walls. The others like the mother of Rajimati, Samudravijaya and Rathanemi, the younger brother of the renouncing prince who prayed for the hand of Rajimati at the

moment of her sorrow and realisation were faithfully represented by Sm. Manju Lunia, Sm. Bina Kochar and Sm. Jayasri Sethia respectively. Among all the roles in *Nemi Pravajyā* that of Krsna played by Sm. Mitu Dugar glowed for a momentary revelation of divine love and a mystic comprehension. The drama referred to this love of Krsna that is at times lonely and mysterious towards the law of the universe as estimated by the mortals. Herein Lalwani has evinced a profound understanding of Jaina mythology. He is not only a playwright but also an academician with genius for composing works of high lyrical value. His compositions often come within the range of art, poetical and soulful. The audience of the drama were absorbed by the last scene where Rajimati dances before meditating Aristanemi (Sm. Sashi Karnawat) in a grotto of mount Raivataka. The music of the opera either orchestrated as a melody or produced with the cadence of the longings of souls will pay a high tribute to the talent of the musician Sri Rabi Biswas. The rapertory of songs were sung by Sm. Chitra Banerjee with her own tune. These enthralled the audience and voiced the moods of scenes. A few other numbers including the bravura of the hunters were sung with a golden tenor by Sri Om Prakash, another vocalist of the team. Actually, the entire dance sequences were initially choreographed by Sm. Banerjee. For the effects of lighting in respect of the approach of the dawn, the illuminated environments of the palace, the charm of a day and the sublime haze of twilight the credit goes to Sri Anil Shaha, whereas the costumes were designed by *Rūpāyana* of Calcutta. Altogether the staging of *Nemi Pravajyā* will be remembered for its message of sublime love and Nemi's journey across the mystery of existence.

Wherefrom the resonance came. The song and orchestra that accompanied the enactment of Nemi Pravajya.

The agony of a poor animal. The hunters are seizing the rabbit.

'Dear friend, bedeck me with ornaments of flowers'. Princess Rajimati requesting her companions before the arrival of Prince Aristanemi.

On to the way to eternity. Aristanemi receives blessings from Krisna before renouncing the material world.

The moment of sorrow and profundity. The anticipation of Rajimati in her bridal attire.

Rajimati is unable to bear her grief when she hears the tidings about Nemi's arrival and his decision to become a recluse.

Before her journey to Mount Raivataka as a female hermit to follow the footsteps of Aristanemi Princess Rajimati receives blessings from Krsna.

With curiosity and readiness for action the young participants in the drama are waiting in the sideways of the stage during the vibrant performance of the Nemi Pravajya.

a quarterly on Jainology

JAIN BHAWAN
CALCUTTA

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